

Labor and Public Employees Committee

February 15, 2007

Raised Bill No. 7034

An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining Rights for In-Home State Subsidized Day Care Providers

My name is Naomi Mitchell and I am a licensed in-home daycare provider in Hartford.

I urge you to support Raised Bill No. 7034, An Act Concerning Collective Bargaining Rights For In-Home State Subsidized Day Care Providers.

I began working as an in-home day care provider in 1996, at first, caring for my grandson Don. My day care has grown and I now watch six children. The youngest, Timmy, is 1 year old and the oldest, Rochelle, is 4 years old. The work is challenging. These are six different children, six different backgrounds, and six different sets of rules at home.

An in-home day care provider has none of the security of a worker in a daycare center. We do not have a guaranteed wage or a predictable paycheck. I want to provide the children with positive experiences that will help them grow into strong, healthy adults. Three years ago I would take the children on trips to places like the Mystic Aquarium. With the rising costs that we all face, I can no longer afford to do this. My overhead - food, utilities, books, toys, etc. - comes out of my pocket. In addition to these costs, I pay \$115 a month for health insurance through AARP and have no access to dental care.

There are difficulties for the parents as well. Eligibility for the Care 4 Kids program is re-determined every six months. A small wage increase that puts a parent \$1 over the income threshold can leave them without childcare or force an in-home day care provider to work for less money. The parents who bring their children to my in-home daycare rely on me, and when the system breaks there is no safety net. If they can't afford childcare, they can't work.

The problems that in-home day care providers and the families who rely on Care 4 Kids face amount to a childcare crisis in Connecticut. The work that I and all other in-home

day care providers do is important and special, and we must act now to make sure that childcare is available to those who need it. With collective bargaining our voice can be heard and we can improve standards for ourselves and for the children and families we serve. I urge you to support Raised Bill No. 7034 for the children I care for, their families and me.

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